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Date: 12/13/2013

GAIN Report Number: HK1352

Hong Kong

Post: Hong Kong

ATO Hong Kong-Delicious Diplomacy On A Dish in Hong Kong

Report Categories:

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Approved By:

Erich Kuss

Prepared By:

Annie Lai

Report Highlights:

Renowned American chef and U.S. Culinary Ambassador Ben Ford visited Hong Kong during November 19-27, 2013 as part of the U.S. Diplomatic Culinary Partnership Program. ATO Hong Kong

and the Consulate's Public Affairs Section organized the program for Chef Ford's week-long stay in Hong Kong that enabled him to explore Hong Kong's rich culinary culture, and to share his unique American craft-driven approach to cooking. The Chef engaged with a wide range of local audiences through menu promotions, two barbecues that benefitted a local non-profit organization, a charity ball to support the Asia Society, visits to local wet markets with food bloggers, volunteer work packing lunches for the indigent elderly, and hands-on food activities with a local high school. The week-long event successfully raised awareness of U.S. foods in Hong Kong, and attracted over 1,500 attendants in all events. In total, 30 stories on Chef Ford's program in Hong Kong were published in various media outlets, all of them positive, reaching an audience of over four million people.

General Information:

To facilitate mutual understanding and cross-cultural exchange using food, hospitality, and the dining experience, and to promote U.S. food products and U.S. food culture, the U.S. Diplomatic Culinary Partnership Program created an American Chef Corps of over 100 American celebrity chefs. These chefs would dedicate themselves to short trips around the world for different outreaching events about foods and dining. The program targets to expand agricultural export goals ultimately.

As part of the program, Renowned American chef and U.S. Culinary Ambassador Ben Ford visited Hong Kong during November 19-27, 2013. ATO Hong Kong and the Consulate's Public Affairs section organized the program for Chef Ford's week-long stay in Hong Kong that enabled him to explore Hong Kong's rich culinary culture, and to share his unique American craft-driven approach to cooking.

Chef Ford engaged with a wide range of local audiences through menu promotions, two barbecues that benefitted a local non-profit organization, a charity ball to support the Asia Society, visits to local wet markets with food bloggers, volunteer work packing lunches for the indigent elderly, and hands-on food activities with a local high school.

The week-long program was successfully executed and brought positive results:

1. Exploring Hong Kong's Rich Culinary Culture

Chef Ford visited local Chinese restaurants, mingled with restaurateurs, chefs and bloggers to understand the history of Hong Kong cuisines and dining culture. He also visited local shops and wet markets to learn local ingredients and the food-shopping pattern.



Photos:

Top left - Chef Ford with restaurateurs and writers Mr. Lau Kin Wai and Mr. Lau Chun in Kin's Kitchen

Top right - Chef Ford visited Apleichai wet market

Bottom left - Chef Ford tasted Chinese cuisines and snake soup in restaurant Ser Wong Fun

Bottom right - Chef Ford visited traditional Chinese grocery shop with blogger Mr. KC Koo

2. Promoting U.S. Foods and Sharing His American Cooking Techniques

Chef Ford visited several kitchens and promoted his signature dishes in local restaurants and shared experiences with chefs. Two renowned restaurants launched menu promotion featuring U.S. quality foods. In addition to menu promotion, Chef Ford demonstrated cooking at a press conference in Conrad Hotel in Hong Kong. He was showing the audience the diversity of U.S. cooking using traditional American cooking technique and quality U.S. ingredients.

In his cooking events, a variety of U.S. ingredients was brought under the spotlight including U.S. beef, pork, lamb, sausages, milk, lemons, potatoes, cod, eggs, chickens, and wines.



Photos:

Top left - Chef Ford worked in kitchen of restaurant The Salted Pig

Top right - Chef Ford's signature dish on menu promotion at restaurant The Salted Pig

Bottom left - Chef Ford worked with chefs of Ammo Restaurant at Asia Society Hong Kong

Bottom right - Chef Ford's signature dish at press conference at Conrad Hong Kong

3. Charity and Community Events

ATO Hong Kong tied up Chef Ford's events with local food assistance program, Food Angel, to help the underprivileged community in Hong Kong. Chef Ford alongside the Consulate's team of volunteers, packed 1,100 lunch boxes, and participated in two barbecues that benefitted Food Angel's operation.

Chef Ford also spent a morning with over 200 high school students to teach them hands-on skills to prepare healthy meals.



Photos:

Top left - Chef Ford, Consul General Clifford Hart, ATO Director Erich Kuss, and members from the U.S. Consulate worked at Food Angel's kitchen to prepare meals for the needy

Top right - Chef Ford worked at Food Angel's kitchen

Bottom left - Chef Ford's addressed to student at ELCHK Lutheran Secondary School

Bottom right - Chef Ford attended a charity barbeque at Asia Society

4. Positive Responses from Media and Attendants

The week-long event successfully raised awareness of U.S. foods in Hong Kong, and attracted over 1,500 attendants in all events. In total, 30 stories on Chef Ford's program in Hong Kong were published in various media outlets, all of them positive, reaching an audience of over four million people.



夏千福迎美國名廚

福伯阿仔來港助飲食外交

美國駐港總領事夏千福 (Clifford A. Hart) 雖意唔香港周圍食，好多人知，但原來美國國務院都鍾意搞「飲食外交」。最近，荷李活影星「福伯」夏理遜福 (Harrison Ford) 個仔、美國名廚 Benjamin Ford (阿 Ben) 應國務院飲食外交項目邀請來港，夏千福昨日就以一身廚師裝扮囉酒店同佢見面。本來個活動係 set 美食，但唔少記者都旁敲側擊，希望夏千福評論近日政事。

回應：天然雞汁助提味

雖然夏千福已被認定為食家，但未必好鍾意煮，見佢金足 15 分鐘，都無落場獻技。有記者問夏千福同阿 Ben 會唔會煮中菜？用唔用雞汁？阿 Ben 話，雞汁的確有助提味，若係天然都無乜問題嘅。夏千福就話，佢會食所有地區嘅中菜，用普通話講就係「無所不吃」。

夏千福拒以食物喻政治

無所不吃，係咪鍾意食 buffet 多啲，好過有個特定餐單呢？呢種食嘢哲學，係咪都可套落政改呢？夏千福面對追問笑笑口答：「Food is food (食物就是食物)」，唔會用嘢做比喻。夏千福強調今次係商務活動，臨走前亦無回應全國人大常委會副秘書長李飛訪港等提問。



▲阿 Ben (中) 係夏理遜福 (左) 個仔，廚藝出眾亦熱心公益，曾喺洛杉磯慈善機構「LA Mission」75 周年時為逾 5000 個無家者煮聖誕大餐。(facebook 圖片)



▲阿 Ben 另一味，銀鱈魚餅伴番茄汁同水浸波菜，鍾鍾地搵開胃。(黃志東攝)



影星夏理遜福個仔、美國名廚 Benjamin Ford (右一)，早前應國務院飲食外交項目邀請來港，美國駐港總領事夏千福 (左一) 昨日以廚師造型支持。「福仔」示範以綠葉技術烹製野生三文魚，用啲配餸時廚署仔沙律同薑蔥，但夏千福無試食。(黃志東攝)

國際講場 劉雲

來自加州的陽光 Ben Ford

飲食不單是文化，更加支持着龐大的貿易及其他行業的發展，香港一直入口大量美國食材。來自美國加州的 Ben Ford 這一趟堅負重任，來港宣揚美國飲食文化。

Ben 是美國國務院烹飪交流計劃派來的廚師，他本身在加州亦甚有名氣：Ben 另一引人注目的原因就是他的父親夏理遜·福是知名影星，Ben 憶述年幼時，父親仍未踏上銀幕前是一名木匠，因父親的影響，他愛用一雙手去創作，而且六歲開始已經在家中後園種蔬菜，到十二歲那年，家中的感恩節大餐已經由他一手包辦了。

父為夏理遜福

年輕時期，Ben 在三藩市名廚 Alice Waters 旗下的餐廳工作，學會運用加州豐富的有機食材，其後在 Santa Monica 的 Opus 擔任廚師。Ben 熱愛天然優質食材，並且愛用直接、傳統的手法把食材的風味徹底發揮。他在洛杉磯開設的 Gastropub 名為 Ford's Filling Station，大受好評，獲《洛杉磯時報》評為兩粒半星。

所謂 Gastropub 就是酒吧和餐廳的混合體，以美食和手作啤酒為主打，Ben 熱愛地中海風味烹飪，而他至今仍愛砌東西，他的新書 Taming the feast: Ben Ford's field manual to adventurous cooking，收錄了他的烹飪心得，包括用金屬和木材製作烹飪工具。

提起美式飲食文化，大部分人即時聯想到漢堡包和速食，Ben 身為美國飲食大使，就是要改變人們的誤解，他說美國各地都有各自的飲食風格，東岸曾是世界各地的移民落腳地，故此聚集了世界不同的菜系如意大利、南美菜式。

展現烹飪新貌

此外，美國南部有法國色彩的 Cajun 風格，而德州、新墨西哥州等地則較受南美和亞裔影響。俄勒岡、華盛頓的烹飪風格主要受原住民影響，例如用蘋果木煙燻食材。

過往加州的飲食文化以三藩市為主導，但近年洛杉磯已經追上，未來西岸的飲食焦點將會是墨西哥境內的 Baja California，加州南部的半島，地中海氣候加上充足的陽光，豐富的海洋資源，成為大廚們的遊樂場。

Ben 近年專注搜尋各種「在地」(local) 有機食材，亦推動飲食教育和相關的慈善活動，自己的餐廳十年來創作了近千道菜色，未來更會參與電視節目製作，探討食材和菜式的背景和歷史。筆者和 Ben 談了一個上午，深深感受他對烹飪的熱情，近年美國飲食界人才輩出，希望以後有多些類似的交流。



■ Ben 在香港期間到鴨洲街市參觀，他對香港豐富的海鮮選擇表示驚嘆。

Photos:

Top-News clip from Ming Pao Daily on Nov 26 regarding Chef Ford's press conference on Nov 25

Bottom- Column in Hong Kong Economic Journal on Dec 2 regarding Chef Ford and his cooking